

# INVESTIGACIONES

## STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE PREVALENCE, FORMS AND CAUSES OF CHILD ABUSE IN EDO STATE, NIGERIAN

### *PERCEPCIÓN DE LOS ESTUDIANTES ACERCA DE LA PREVALENCIA, FORMAS Y CAUSAS DE ABUSO A MENORES EN EDO, NIGERIA*

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#### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perception of incidence of child abuse among secondary school students in Edo State with focus on guidance and Counselling implications. In order to accomplish this, four research questions were raised: (i) What was the extent of child abuse among secondary school students in Edo State? (ii) What were the frequencies of occurrence of child abuse? (iii) Was child abuse more prevalent in rural than urban area? (iv) What were the common causes of child abuse? The article presents the objectives, methodology and results of the study and its implications for guidance.

**Key Words:** child abuse, secondary school students, guidance and Counselling, Edo State (Nigeria).

#### RESUMEN

La finalidad de este estudio fue investigar la percepción que tienen los estudiantes de secundaria acerca de la incidencia de abuso a menores en el Estado de Edo, Nigeria, con énfasis en las implicaciones para la Orientación. Se plantearon cuatro cuestiones de investigación: (i) ¿Cuál es el alcance del abuso a menores entre los estudiantes de secundaria del Estado de Edo? (ii) ¿Con qué frecuencia ocurren dichos abusos? (iii) ¿Se producen más abusos en zonas rurales que en áreas urbanas? (iv) ¿Cuáles son las causas más comunes del abuso a menores? Este artículo presenta los objetivos, metodología y resultados del estudio y sus implicaciones para la orientación.

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**Palabras clave:** abuso a menores, estudiantes de secundaria, orientación, asesoramiento, Estado de Edo (Nigeria).

## Introduction

Ever since Kempe and his associates (1962) described child abuse, this problem has become a recent decimal in social and political discourse as a result of its physical and psychological consequences. There is a growing scientific and social relevance of child abuse as represented by the increasing number of papers in international literature dealing with the problem (Blasio and Camisasaca 1996). Here in Nigeria, evidences abound that child abuse has been on the increase (ANPPCAN 1963, UNICEF 1986, Ifidi 1988, Orubu, Momoh and Ogunu 2001). This ugly phenomenon ranges from physical and sexual abuse, material deprivation, malnutrition, street hawking, aborted babies, prostitution etc.

The International Labour Organization estimates that children under 15, who work, are up to 95% and are unpaid family workers. In Edo state, as well as in other parts of the country, such family workers are street hawkers, farm handling, shopkeeping and others. This situation children find themselves are usually as a result of economic and financial incapacitation of parents to provide the basic necessities of life, such as food, comfortable accommodation, clothes and sound education (Domiya 1995). Keun (1993) Surveyed 340 children in Korea and discovered that 87% of families battered their children, 51.2% by mothers, 29.9% by fathers and 11.8% by siblings.

In Nigeria, Women Education Unit of the Federal Ministry of Education (1988), observed that child abuse could stem from a culture that permits and even encourages corporal punishment of children, either by parents, teachers or the society. Dogamaci (1986) is of the view that those who concern themselves with child rearing are often surprised to find that in certain cultures, so much genuine love for the child is coupled with punishment. To the outsider, this may seem strangely paradoxical, but closer inspection will probably reveal that the intention behind the punishment is for the benefit of the child. He added that some parents are also quick to punish encouraged by religious precepts, "He that spareth his rod hateth his son, but he that loveth him chastened him betimes" (the bible) and "Beatings are heaven sent" (the Koran).

Orubuloye, Caldwell and Caldwell (1993) found that young hawkers are more Vulnerable to forms of violence including sexual exploitation by men. They found that 15% of 467 hawkers surveyed in Ibadan lost their virginity to rape by older men, while 90% reported that drivers, passengers and other men frequently made sexually aggressive advances at them. Fawole, Ajuwon, Oungbade and Faweye (2003) found that the common violent acts experienced by the subjects were sexual harassment, (36.3%, economic violent (27.5%) forced marriage (31.8%) and involuntary withdrawal from school (31.5%). More than half reported, that they had been beaten or battered by men, while about one third (30.4%) had been sexually abused, the main perpetrators of the abuse being drivers or bus conductors (44.8%) and friends (16.2%). These violent acts mostly occurred at motor parks (47.6%) and at home (29.2%). About one quarter (26.3%) had experienced attempted rape, while 19 (5.5%) subjects had been raped. Most of the oppressed women (70.49%) did not seek care or redress.

Another form of child abuse is child neglect, but research directly investigating the consequences of child neglect is scarce. (Herrenkohl 1990) Wolock and Horowitz (1994) point to this scarcity of research as a further indicator of the overshadowing of neglect by abusers. Many neglected children are represented as suffering from medical conditions, failure to thrive, or malnutrition, which their severe forms may be life – threatening (Deotar 1992). The unavailability of family support services is a common theme in child protection services in Britain, the United States and Australia (Hallet and Biachall 1992, Nelson Saunders and Landsman 1993, Tomison 1994, Department of Health, in Press) The lack of appropriate services is obviously of greater importance when dealing with more severe chronic cases of neglect.

In Nigeria, the incidence of child abuse has not been given its desired publicity. This must have been responsible for the scanty attention it has received from educators, administrators, Counselling psychologists, social workers and even politicians. Although child abuse has been given wide attention in international journal, but its context may vary across different cultures and settings. In developed countries according to (Blasio and Camisasca 1996), child abuse occur in the family, while in less developed countries it may occur outside the family, because of the different socio-cultural and economic problems.

This study therefore aims at the following among others:

- (i) To what extent is secondary school students abuse in Edo State?
- (ii) The frequencies at which they occur
- (iii) The most typical of the forms of abuse
- (iv) Whether it is more in the rural areas?
- (v) Common causes of child abuse

## Research Questions

The study was designed to answer the following questions.

- (i) To what extent are secondary school students abused in Edo State?
- (ii) What are the frequencies of occurrence of child abuse?
- (iii) Where is it more prevalent in rural or urban?
- (iv) What are the common causes of child abuse?

## Methodology

This study was conducted in Edo State, Nigeria. One thousand five hundred (1,500) copies of the questionnaire were distributed. The state was stratified into three senatorial districts, using three schools per district, two schools from the urban and one from the rural areas. Our own definition of urban was a school that is located in the state capital, or Local Government headquarters and while rural schools were schools outside these specifications. The final selection of nine schools for the study was done, by simple balloting from each sub-section of the strata living an average of 167 respondents per school.

A questionnaire on child abuse was developed by the authors called Child Abuse Questionnaire (CAQ). The questionnaire was presented among the secondary schools, one each from the three senatorial districts that were not need for the study. The exercise was necessary in order to determine items that were not functioning well, and thereby subject them to modification, or reject them. Some of our colleagues equally scrutinize the instrument before the final adoption.

The respondents were selected by a systematic sampling method; the students were gathered in school hall, and a detailed explanation was given on the nature and purpose of the study. The respondents were assured of anonymity and confidentiality of their responses and they were not to write their names. Out of the 1,500 copies of the questionnaire that were not properly filled were dropped. The data obtained were analyzed using ranking and percentages.

## Results

The result of table 1 showed 27% of the respondents saw incidence of child abuse as very high in Edo State, 57% of the respondents saw it as, moderately high, while 16% of the respondents saw it as low.

**TABLE 1: The extent of child abuse in Edo State.**

	Very High	Moderate	Low	Total
Respondents	363 (27)	781 (57)	223 (16)	1,367 (100)

The results of table 2, showed that street hawking, physical abuse and child neglect occurred most frequently in Edo State.

**TABLE 2: Stuents perception regarding the causes of child abuse**

Nº	Type	Nº of Respondents	Rank	%
1.	Street hawking	442	1	33
2	Physical Abuse (nagging battering and insults)	326	2	24
3	Child neglect (material and psychological deprivation)	221	3	16
4	Home helps	153	3	11
5.	Sexual Abuse	88	5	6.4
6	Work for the family	71	6	5.2
7	Child Prostitution	66	7	4.4
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1,367</b>		

The result in table 3 showed that incidence of child abuse was more prevalent in the rural areas than in the urban areas, 63% said that it was more prevalent in rural areas than urban areas, while only 37% asserted that it was an urban problem.

**TABLE 3: Students perception of prevalence rate of child abuse (rural or urban)**

Rural	Urban	Total%
863 (63%)	504 (37)	100%

**TABLE 4: Students' perception of common causes of child abuse**

S/N	Causes	Frequency	Rank	%
1	Poverty	400	1	29
2.	Breakdown in traditional values	303	2	22
3.	Attempts to make ends meets	261	3	19
4.	Parental neglect	202	4	15
5.	Excessive discipline	111	5	08
6.	Influence of media	90	6	07

The result showed that 400 or (29%) respondents attributed child abuse to poverty, 303 or 22% to breakdown in traditional values, 261 or 19% to attempts to make ends meet, 200 or 15% to parent neglect, 111 or 08% to excessive discipline and 90 or 07% to the influence of the media.

## Discussion

The result of table 1 showed that students' perception of incidence of child abuse is moderately high in Edo State, with 57% of the respondents seeing it so, while 27% perceive it as very high and only 16% of the respondents perceive it as low. The outcome of this study is in line with what was observed by Domiya (1995) that why parents engaged their children in all forms of labour is as a result of economic and financial incapacitation to provide the basic necessities of life, such as food, comfortable accommodation, clothes, and sound education.

Table 2 shows the perceived frequency of types of child abuse. The result showed that street hawking is the most typical with 33% followed by physical abuse with 24% and child neglect with 16% and so forth. This is in line with the finding of Orubuloye, Caldwell and Caldwell (1993) who discovered that young street hawkers are most vulnerable to violent sexual exploitation by men. They found that 1,590 of the 4,678 hawkers surveyed in Ibadan lost their virginity due to rape by older men, while 90% reported that drivers and passenger often make aggressive sexually advances towards them.

The physical abuse of the child was also observed by the Women Education Unit of the Federal Ministry of Education (1988) as well as others, elsewhere. The unit observed that child abuse stem in a culture that permit and even encourages corporal punishment of children. Dogramaci (1986) observed that so much genuine love for the child is couple wit frequent and often corporal punishment. To the outsider, he said that this may seem paradoxical, but closer inspection, will show that the intention behind it, is to the benefit of the child. Child neglect is also in line with what Diotar (1992) observed, that many neglected children are presented as suffering from medical conditions, failure to thrive or lack of proper nutrition.

Table 3 showed that child abuse is more prevalent in the rural areas than urban. Although the prevalent rate is more in the rural areas, but it is also quite evident in the urban, this is in accordance with the assertion of Domiya (1995), that as a result of economic and financial incapacitation of parents to provide the basic necessities of life, children are sent into the streets for hawking, at the expense of their schooling and with the attendant evil of being lured into early sex or raped, violent acts and shopkeepers and farm hands.

Table 4, showed that the first three most predominant causes of child abuse are:

Poverty, Breakdown of our traditional values, attempts to make ends meet, among others. In Nigeria, as well as Edo State, poverty is the most dominant factors responsible for child abuse; Domiya (1995) was earlier cited on this. The break down in traditional values, still stem from poverty as well as attempt to make some ends meet that have grossly led to some unwholesome practices children are subjected to, in order for parents and significant others to break even.

### **The Role of Guidance Counsellor**

Child abuse has a serious implication for the growth of our educational system. The prevalence of child abuse is becoming more manifest, perhaps due to the current downward trend in the nation's economy. The resultant effect of this, is that children who should have normally being school, are engaged by parents and significant others, in street trading with its attendant negative effect on the children.

It is the duty of the practicing counselor therefore, to manipulate the child's environment, in order to liberate him from being a victim of the peculiarity of his own environment.

The school counselor, should develop a definite programme in school to assist the students and perhaps parents to resolve their educational, vocational and personal-social problems.

The school counselor counselor, should show, unconditional regard and acceptance, to those who are already victims of child abuse with a view of assisting them to be sensitive of their peculiarity and how to resolve their situation.

The counselor should through his services in school try to reach all and sundry irrespective their situations in life.

The counselor should utilize the services of the school principal and teachers, to identify those who are not frequent in school for special attention.

The counselor, through his services should be needs of the child and perhaps through research results, disseminate information to policy makers and other agents of government.

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